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January 23, 2024

***Testimony of Rep. Anne-Marie Mastraccio introducing  
LD 2136, An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals  
Before the Joint Select Committee on Housing***

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, I am Anne-Marie Mastraccio, representing House District 142, part of the City of Sanford and the village of Springvale. I am before you today to present **LD 2136, An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals**.

This bill provides additional ongoing funds for homeless shelters in our state, in the amount of 10 million dollars. I know that ongoing funding for anything is a hard sell because we have so many worthy requests, but this is an emergency.

We have approximately 42 shelters operating in Maine with 1,169 beds. They are organized and administered by various nonprofits, and they are all operating with deficits. They are forced to raise the majority of their funds from a variety of different sources to keep their doors open. Many of these shelters are in danger of closing at a time when the numbers and needs of the unhoused have never been greater.

In your work on this committee, you have explored the critical need for more housing in every area of our state and proposed a variety of solutions. However, it will take time for that work make a real dent in the housing shortage and begin to lessen this crisis.

In the meantime, communities like Sanford are wrestling with this problem daily, and we need help. We don't come to the state with our hands out, without some serious action on our own part. Ever since the numbers of unhoused individuals exploded last year, we have engaged with partners like York County Community Action, Sanford Housing Authority, York County Shelter Program and Caring Unlimited, to name just a few, to alleviate the situation.

I have included a sobering snapshot of the crisis that was presented during the York County Homelessness Forum hosted in Sanford on December 11. It lays out the problem very clearly. The growing need has rapidly outpaced our available resources and it will take more than we

currently have to ensure that no Mainer is sleeping in a tent this winter. I believe it is our obligation, moral or otherwise, to follow through on our commitments to the people of Maine and aid municipalities in serving the needs of the unhoused. This is not a Portland, Lewiston or Sanford problem; it is not a Cumberland or York County problem. It is a Maine problem and it deserves your consideration and support.